For as *Religion* is the Perfection and Glory, ſo *Wickedneſs* is the Degeneracy and Confuſion of Man.

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THE END.

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muſt next, reckon, that we are then *Religious*, when we are in *practice and frame*, confirm'd unto it. So we ſhall advance to the ſublimeſt Perfection and Bleſſedneſs; be aſſimulated unto, and partake of the Divine Nature; reſemble, unite with, and enjoy the God of Wiſdom and Holineſs, of Perfection, Bleſſedneſs, and Glory. Thus is *Religion* that Service which men perform unto God, upon their knowledge of, and expectation from him, according to his will. This is the general *Nature* of Religion, which is an excellency peculiar unto Man; and according to the diſtinct capacities of Man, are the eſſential parts of Religion. If therefore we deſire what is proper for, and perfective of us, in all our capacities, of Being, Doing, and Enjoying, we muſt be Religious: and if we *would avoid* what is contrary unto, and deſtructive of us in all thoſe capacities, we muſt abhor all irreligion.

*Ad ſimilitudinem enim dei propius accedebat humana virtus quam figura.* Cotta Tull. *de nat. deor.* p. 63.

For

makes *profeſſion* of true Religion, it muſt farther be examined, whether he lives according to ſuch Profeſſion, and be *truly Religious:* And that a man may judge of, by theſe Rules. He who *values* the improvement of Religion (Wiſdom and Holineſs) as the higheſt accompliſhments of a Man: and ſeeks that accompliſhment according to that eſteem. He who *delights* in the company of the Religious, as the moſt agreeable pleaſure of Society, and chuſes his Friends according to ſuch inclinations. He who *imitates* the example of God, as the moſt Fundamental veneration of his Majeſty: and acts Juſtice, Truth, Charity, *&c.* as Divine; he is *truly Religious*, and *none but he* *. Let us then, make *ſuch an eſtimate* of Religion; that 'tis *nothing elſe* but Divine Wiſdom and Holineſs. And let us adore thoſe Perfections, which are eſſentially Divine. And when we do thus, both conceive of, and admire Religion: We muſt

* *Nihil aliud ſumus Chriſtiani, niſi Magiſtro Chriſto, ſummi Regis, ac Principis veneratores.* Arrab. cont. Gent. l. 1. p. 14.

and on behalf of that, no unreasonable demands are necessary *. But *Moral Honesty* is *most absolutely necessary*, to a mans finding out true Religion; and 'tis in vain to direct, or perswade him, who (for worldly, or vicious ends) is resolved before-hand, to be of such or such a perswasion. He that loves Religion, as 'tis *Wisdom and Holiness*, may be directed, and assured in finding out true Religion: But he who does not love *such a character* of Religion, is insincere in his enquiries after it. *By these*, a man may know, what Religion is true †; and he who abandons any of these, will fall into that Religion which is false. He who disowns Human Reason, he who violates Natural Religion, he who slights the Holy Scriptures, he who presumes without faithful Guidance, he who is not Morally Honest, will be either Enthusiastical, or Superstitious. But if a man

* *Sed fides pura & aperta non quærit strophas & argumenta verborum. Quod simpliciter creditur, simpliciter confitendum est.* Hieron.

† 1 Pet. 3. 15.

ten) be true. A *Faithful Assistance* is useful unto any Person in his enquiries concerning Religion; and every considerate Man will *use*, and every honest Man may *judge*, of such Assistance. So a *Traveller*, who most needs direction in his way, is in some sort able to judge of the Direction; and according to his degree of Knowledge, is his ability to judge, both of the Counsel and Fidelity of his Guide. And as the usefulness and necessity of a Guide to a Traveller, does not oblige him to renounce his own Eyes, and Understanding, and Knowledge; so does not the usefulness of a Spiritual Guide, lay any *like* Obligation upon Men, as to Religion. He that makes use of a Guide in his Journey, or Religion, is supposed to be a *Man*: And therefore the proper work of a Guide, is to inform, and satisfie his Reason, not to supersede it. All Doctrines of Religion which oblige us to follow our Guide, and forbid us to examine his faithfulness, are to be suspected; and Truth is always confident, because credible; and

derſtand and believe it, when diſcovered. And therefore no Doctrine which is inconſiſtent with Reaſon, can be part of *Religion* (which is the perfection of Wiſdom and Reaſon.) *Natural Religion* (the *Principles* of which are, the Being and Providence of God; the *Duties* of which are, the difference of good and evil;) will diſcover the truth of pretences to Supernatural Religion: For all ſuch Supernatural Religion is comprehenſive and perfective of what is Natural; and therefore no Religion can be true, which is contrary to that which is natural. The *Holy Scripture* is the Doctrine of Religion, delivered as to matter and manner by God himſelf: And 'tis fit we ſhould count it our Wiſdom to *receive* Religion in that ſort, which God has thought fit (in his wiſdom) to *deliver* it. And therefore all Doctrines of Religion, which are contrary to the Holy Scriptures, muſt be falſe *: if God (by whoſe inſpiration thoſe Books were writ-

* *Adverſus Regulam nihil ſcire, omnia ſcire eſt.* Tertull.

and whether he be truly *Religious**. What is of such importance to be known, God has provided means sufficient to discover: and every one who is concerned in that matter, may (in the use of those means) be assured, concerning the *truth* of the Doctrine, and the *sincerity* of the practice of his Religion. By *Human Reason*, *Natural Religion*, the *Holy Scriptures*, *Faithful Assistance*, *Moral Honesty*, a man may judge of the truth of the Religion he makes profession of, or is invited to: For 'tis by our *Reason*, that we are capable of Religion, insomuch that no Creature has any appearance of Religion, but those, who have the endowment of Reason. Therefore, since 'tis by the Rational Faculty, that we receive the notices, and act the duties of Religion, no matter can be any part of true Religion, which is contrary to Human Reason. And although Reason cannot *find out* all Religious Truth; yet 'tis an act of Reason to understand

* Οὐ γὰρ ἐν λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν ἔργοις τὰ τῆς ὑμετέρας θεοσεβίας φεύγματα. Justin. M. ad Gr. p. 33.

Sinner, to assume the expectation of the Penitent. *Without Holiness* *, *no man can see God:* And we can no farther enjoy the Happiness, than we are changed into the likeness of Heaven; *Knowing therefore these terrors, and mercies of the Lord, we perswade men.* Being sure, that ruine must be the portion of those, who do not, in the methods appointed, seek for Glory. Let us then, so live, that we may attain the likeness of God, and so shall we be sure of the blessed Communion with him: For 'tis impossible that any who is endued with his Divine Image, should perish; or that any, who is destitute of it, should be saved. But as every man must be Happy by his own enjoyment, so he must be Religious by his own act: And it concerns every man by the practice of true Religion, to be entituled unto true Happiness. There are vain pretences unto true Religion, and hypocritical pretences to true Happiness: And it concerns every man, very much, to know *what Religion* is true,

* Heb. 12. 14.

gations we are under; if we desire the Blessings we are consigned to: If we value the perfections which are infinite in God, and the resemblance of them, which is integrity in our selves: If we are grateful for the unspeakable Love of our Saviour, and are willing to be secured of it, by the transformation of his Holy Spirit: If we consider how much we are concerned in the Judgment of the last day, and the portion of Eternity: If we cannot hope Mercy at the great day, or joy in Heaven; separate from the preparation which is necessary to it: Then must we either resolve to live according to the Religion of Christ, or expect to perish for living contrary to it*. There is no other choice, but *one of these*; present Integrity, and future Blessedness; or present Sin, and eternal Perdition. By all that is happy, by all that is true, and by all that is sacred; we are obliged, if we estrange from the Duty, to abandon the hopes of Christians; or encouraged in reforming the Life of a Sinner,

* 2 Thess. 1. 8, 9.

ſtudy; and the *Temper* of it we may attain by practice, and the *Reward* of it we may attain by preparation. So far then, as a Man is *Religious*, ſo far he does, enjoys, and is, in that degree, a moſt perfect Man*: So far as any man is *irreligious*, ſo far he does, ſuffers, and is, in that degree, an imperfect and degenerate Perſon. If the accompliſhment of our Perſons, if the rectitude of our Actions, if the happineſs of Enjoyment be deſirable, then 'tis deſirable to be Religious: And if we do not love Religion, we abandon all theſe. Let us ſhew our ſelves Men, in being Chriſtians; and then we ſhall be more than Men in participating of the Nature † and Glory of God. But if we chuſe now the delights, and the ſtupidity of Beaſts, in being wicked, we ſhall receive the portion and deſtruction of Devils, in being miſerable.

* *Eſſe Chriſtianum grande eſt* — Hierom. Ep. 13.

† 2 Pet. 1. 4.

If we are ſincere in the Profeſſion we make; if we are faithful to the Obligations

ment is intire Sufficiency. But *Religion teaches* us the utmoſt knowledge of God, which is ſublime Wiſdom, and ſo the perfection of our Rational Nature. Religion *obliges* us to keep the Commandments of God, which is Spiritual Holineſs, and ſo the perfection of our Voluntary Actions. Religion *aſſures* us of true Happineſs, which is compleat Sufficiency, and ſo the perfection of our Proper Enjoyment. Theſe are *all the Capacities* of Man, and theſe improvements are the fulneſs of thoſe Capacities; & therefore that fulneſs is the perfection of Man. But Religion is fitted for ſuch an improvement of Man, according to all theſe capacities; and therefore Religion is, to thoſe who live by it, the Perfection of Man. If then we deſire (as every Being does) the perfection of our ſelves; and if we be convinced (as in Juſtice we ought to be) that Religion is that Perfection; then muſt we chuſe Religion, as we chuſe our Perfection, ſo far as the choice of that Perfection is in our Power. But the *knowledge* of it we may attain by ſtudy;

Enjoyment. Every one who is capable of ſuch Knowledge which is beſt, is alſo inclined thereby, to deſire what is beſt: And if a man be wiſe, he is wiſe for himſelf*. That is always *beſt*, which is *wiſeſt*; and that is moſt advantageous which is beſt: If then, we deſire any degree of good, for the ſame reaſon, we are to deſire that degree, which is greateſt. Now Religion in practice, is that greateſt good; for 'tis our utmoſt Perfection, above which, there can be nothing. *Perfection* is that improvement of any Being, (in the higheſt degree) of which, according to its powers, ſuch a Being is capable: And therefore if Religion be ſuch an improvement of Man, it muſt needs be his Perfection. Now that it is ſo, the manifeſtation lies thus: *In Man* there is his Rational Nature, whoſe improvement is ſublime Wiſdom; his Voluntary Actions, whoſe improvement is Spiritual Holineſs; and his Proper Enjoyment, whoſe improvement

* Prov. 9. 12. *Nemo alii naſcitur, moritur ſibi.* Tertull. de pallio.

ment. But if we ſhall fore-ſee Evil, and not fear; or if notwithſtanding our fear, we ſhall not provide againſt it, the torment of our Sufferings will be exaſperated by the reflexion upon our folly; and we ſhall be doubly miſerable, to feel our utmoſt puniſhment, and to look back upon our obſtinate ſtupidity. God has made us (as men) *Rational*, *i. e.* wiſe and ſagacious: God has made us (as Chriſtians) more ſo. Therefore, if we now act according to the wiſdom of Religion, we ſhall at laſt, fare according to the advantage of it; and he who is wiſe unto Holineſs, is ſo unto Salvation. The truth of the Propoſition is perſuaſive to our Duty; and the Argument to our Choice, is like the demonſtration to our Underſtanding. We are urged to be Religious, becauſe thereby we are Perfect; and the more we act according to Religion, the more we act like Men. To be a Man is to be a Rational Creature; that is, one who underſtanding the trueſt Excellency, and the beſt Advantage of his Nature, Actions, and Enjoy-

the *future judgments* we are obnoxious to; ſo we ſhould act according to our obligations of Duty and Intereſt. We can (by Reaſon and Faith) be aſſured of an eternity of Happineſs or Miſery to be aſſigned unto men, according to their Works, in the laſt day: And how diſtant ſoever that great Event be, we can fully apprehend the importance of it. Therefore as our Reaſon is given us by God, for his Glory, and our own Happineſs, we are obliged to uſe it to thoſe purpoſes; and not to act like Beaſts that have no Rational Underſtanding, ſince we are forced to expect like Men who have *. We who can ſee Torment and Perdition at a diſtance, are bound to provide for an eſcape from it: And we who can ſee Joy and Glory as far off, ſhould with like Providence, ſecure our Title to it. If we do ſo, we ſhall for ever approve the wiſdom and advantage of our Choice: And when we, at laſt, enjoy good, bleſs God, who directed us to prepare for that Enjoyment.

* Pſal. 32. 9. Prov. 26. 3. Iſa. 1. 3.

Happy or Miſerable: For although, as to the kind of Happineſs, there may be deliberation; yet as to the thing in general, there can be none. As therefore, by the powers of *Senſe* we perceive what is profitable and delightful, or noxious and uneaſie; ſo by the powers of *Action* we promote the acquiſition and continuance of the one, and endeavour the prevention or removal of the other. Now, as upon admonition of Senſe we do what is common to us, and thoſe who have nothing *but Senſe*: So upon admonition of *Reaſon* we are bound to do what is peculiar to us as Men. We are obliged, I ſay, not only in point of Duty, but of *Intereſt*: And as Reaſon is a more ſagacious apprehenſion of what is good to be enjoyed, or bad to be ſuffered; and a more effectual guidance, as to what good is to be done, or evil is to be avoided: So we ſhould (in congruity to our Rational Powers) practiſe for our Perſonal welfare. As by Reaſon, all underſtand the nature of thoſe *Laws* which we are under, and are aware of the

good from God, but he is obliged by it to glorifie him. As the profeſſion of thoſe Truths, and obligation to thoſe Duties, and conſignation to this Happineſs; we are *Baptized* in the Name, and celebrate the *Supper* of our Lord. By the one, we are initiated into the number of Diſciples; by the other, we remember the death of our Maſter. According to the *New Covenant* eſtabliſhed in the Blood of Chriſt, we by theſe two, take upon our ſelves obligation to Duties on our part; and receive pledges of thoſe Benefits which are promiſed on God's part. This is the great deſign of our Religion, to inform us in what is the excellency of Wiſdom, to oblige us to what is the excellency of Holineſs, and to bring us to what is the excellency of Felicity. Every Creature does naturally and neceſſarily deſire what is its proper and utmoſt enjoyment: And Man (who is the beſt of Creatures in this World) has ſuch deſires ſuitable to his Nature, and inſeparable from it. No man poſſibly can be indifferent, whether he be

Happy

that Happineſs are, the accompliſhing of our *ultimate end*, which is the glorification of God; and the attaining our *chief good*, which is a perfective participation from him. According as we are *capable* of theſe, they are both of them in this World: And * *God* (who is infinitely Great and Good) *is glorified* by us, by our promoting, as we are able, the Honour of his Name, the Propagation of his Religion, the Obedience of his Servants. *We partake* from him what is neceſſary to our welfare, *viz.* The ſupport of our Lives, the forgiveneſs of our Sins, and the conſervation of our Integrity. For, *He* hath the moſt perfect Dominion and Power over us, and an Honour ſuitable thereto. *Theſe two, viz.* this Glorification of God, and participation from him, are inſeparably *united:* for no man can glorifie God but by thoſe good things received from him; and no man can receive good

* *Vid.* The Lord's Prayer. *Quantum ſubſtringitur verbis, tantum diffunditur ſenſibus.* —— *Ut revera in oratione breviarium totius Evangelii comprehendatur.* Tertull. de Orat.

which we desire, and is the excellency of *Happiness* (*viz.* our ultimate end, and chief good) which is the perfection of our *Proper Enjoyment.* The *means* by which we may advance to that satisfaction, and the *matter* of that Happiness contained in it, the *engagements* we are under to the pursuit, and the *remembrance* we have of what is necessary to, and provided for it, are worthy to be noted. For God has established the *Ministry of his Word,* as the means of Grace *; *viz.* (of Knowledge and Holiness) he has allowed us the liberty of *Prayer,* as the Method of obtaining from him what we need, and acquiescence in him, for what he bestows; than which, there can be nothing more advantageous to us, and gracious in him. But the *Matter* of that satisfaction is *perfect* in the other World, and *imperfect* in this; as Glory is the consummation of Grace, and Grace the beginning of Glory. The *parts* † of

* 2 Cor. 2. 15, 16.

† Οὐκοῦν δεσις ἐστὶν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης μακαριότητος ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ὁμοίωσις; Greg. Nyss. in Ps. l. 1. c. 1.

reconcile to God, and to our ſelves; and become ſuch as may be approved by his ſentence, and be bleſſed with his fruition. There is this *farther conſideration* to enforce our Repentance; that we are contumelious againſt infinite Mercy, and the moſt ſacred Obligations, in want of it: And that our Perdition will be more rigorous, as our neglect of Salvation offered to the miſerable, is more vicious and horrid *. Thus is that part of Religion which is a reſtraint upon our Actions, a recommendation of it ſelf; and thoſe Commands by which we are governed, are an endearment of that regulation. For God is ſo good unto us, that he has made no other things our unchangeable Duty, but what is an imitation of, or a congruity unto his eſſential perfections; and we, by the duty of obſerving his Laws, attain the glory of reſembling his Nature †.

* Heb. 2. 3.—12. 25.

† 2 Pet. 1. 4. 2 Cor. 3. 18. Eph. 4. 24. Heb. 12. 10. 1 John 3. 2.

3. Religion aſſures us of the *ſatisfaction* which

ble for ever. Let all men understand the Laws of their Religion, and the frame of their Nature; the Perfections of their God, and the quality of their Dependance; the rights of their Brethren, and the necessities of themselves; and they shall from all of them be convinced, that their Sin is their Folly, Shame, and Ruine; that their Duty is their Wisdom, Honour, and Felicity. 'Tis an unspeakable Priviledge that we, who have fool'd and ruined our selves by *sin*, may recover our Glory and Happiness by *Repentance*: And we shall be wanting to our selves, as much as to our Duty, if we do not Repent. All those Reasons which are contained in the Nature of our Duty, and our Sin; in the knowledge of God, the World, and our Selves, do as much oblige us to Repent, as to Obedience: for Repentance is no other thing, than the renewing of that Obedience, which we have by sin forsaken. Let these impressions fix upon our Souls, and the sense of that Necessity work upon our Choice; that from henceforth we may

nicious. * Again, if it were not ſo, then might it be congruous for thoſe who are miſerable without the help of Society, to cement it by unnatural ingratitude, by ſanguinary violence, by deteſtable uncleanneſs, by turbulent rapine, by fraudulent perfidiouſneſs, by malignant contrivance; than which, nothing can be more contrary to the ſecurity of men, or fatal to the intereſts of dependance. If theſe Laws be not neceſſary, then may he whoſe chief part is a Rational Soul, and chief duration in an eternal World, without any regard to either himſelf, or his continuance, on all occaſions gratifie the appetites of his Body, and ſenſualize the temper of his Mind; by all means appropriate the Intereſts of the World, and multiply unprofitable Poſſeſſions; by all arts of aſſuming, lift up himſelf above his equals and betters, and exact all the moſt unreaſonable ſubmiſſions and ſervices; than which, nothing can make a man more certainly miſerable in this Life, and more fatally miſerable

* *V.* Second Table.

Pardon and Happineſs. This Repentance all Sinners muſt be exhorted to; and this Obedience all Penitents muſt continue in; and without theſe, our Duty is extreamly violated, and our Souls utterly loſt. The conſideration of the Natural reaſonableneſs of our Duty, and ſtrong Obligations to it, are ſuch, that he who licentiouſly offends, is guilty of the greateſt folly of Underſtanding and Practice that is poſſible. Nothing can be more agreeable to the wiſe choice of a Rational Being, than to act what is (on all accounts) worthy of him; and our Religious Duty is of that ſort. For *if it be not ſo, then* * may it be worthy and profitable to be ungrateful to the largeſt Bounty, to contemn the moſt glorious perfections, to provoke the moſt irreſiſtible indignation, to alienate what is moſt neceſſarily due, to throw away all leiſure for perſonal improvement: Than which, nothing can ſeem more unreaſonable and pernicious.

* *Vid.* Ten Commandments, Firſt Table.

Honour of Parents may be denied. To do no act of Violence, by which the Life of any may be destroyed. To do no act of Uncleanness, by which the Race of Mankind may be dishonoured. To do no act of Damage, by which the Possessions of any person may be diminished. To do no act of Falshood, by which the Testimony of Witnesses may be invalidated. To contrive no act of Injury, by which the harm of any may be compassed. These together are comprehensive of all that Duty which we ow to God or Men; and in the performance of which, we shall live up to the Dignity of our Nature, and the Majesty of our Religion. But, because by manifold *sins*, we have departed from these measures of actions, 'tis necessary we should by *Repentance* return unto them *: And that renewed Obedience of the sinner is accompanied with, as introduced by godly sorrow for sin, is the terms upon which we may hope for Par-

* Heb. 6. 1. Mat. 3. 2, 8. —4. 17. —7. 21, &c. —28. 20. Acts 17. 30, 31. —

are either Divine, as the Holy Ghoſt; or Religious, as right Faith, and ſincere Charity. The *particulars* of that *Duty* are comprized (by God himſelf) in two Tables, anſwering to, as ariſing from, a two-fold *Love* to God and Men. That Love is the immediate Foundation of all Duty, as the *Decalogue* * is the certain elements of it. By the Commandments of the *firſt Table* we are obliged to own no Being for God, but *Jehovah* only, leſt Polytheiſm ſhould be profeſſed. To uſe no Image in Religious Worſhip, leſt Idolatry ſhould be committed. To ſwear no Oath in falſhood, leſt Perjury ſhould be introduced. To do no Work on the Seventh Day, leſt the neceſſary Religious Exerciſes ſhould be hindred. By the Commandments of the *ſecond Table* † we are obliged to do no act of Ingratitude, by which the

* Deut. 6. 5. 10. 12. 30. 6. Mat. 22. 35, &c. Deut. 5. Exod. 20. Deut. 4. 13. 5. 22. *Vid. Philo. de Decal. Vid.* The Ten Commandments *& diviſionem Decal.* εἰς δύο πενταδας. *Unaquæque tabula præcepta habebat quinque.* Irenæ. l. 2. c. 42.

† *Sic apud nos religioſior ille qui juſtior.* Min. Felix. p. 95.

and inviolableneſs of our Obligations, do continue in ſin, and eſtranged from God; we lay the Foundation of our Ruine, in our choice, and ſhall be eternally wretched in all our capacities, and by juſt infliction. For,

2. Religion obliges us to keep the *Commandments* of God, which is the excellency of Holineſs, and ſo the Perfection of our Voluntary Actions: Since thoſe Duties are an imitation *, as thoſe Laws are a tranſcript of the Purity of God. And ſo there is nothing required of us, by the Authority, but what is recommended by the Goodneſs, and adviſed by the Wiſdom of God. There is in the frame of our Nature, and in the relations of our ſtate, a firm and unchangeable reaſon for our Duty: And conſidering our Original, as Divine, and depending; our Nature, as Rational, and Sociable; there is a Moral neceſſity for our Devotion, Sobriety, and Juſtice. According to the dignity of Holineſs, are *Principles* of it; which are

* Eph. 5. 1. Μιμηταὶ τῦ Θεῦ. Mat. 5. 43.

On the contrary, that he who is irreligious, acts what is the worst ingratitude for the mercy of his Being; and insolence against the Majesty of his Creator, what is the degeneracy of his Spirit, and the contradiction of his Reason; what is a disorder in the Creation he is placed in, and an alienation from the Society he is designed unto; what is the confusion of his Conscience, and the destruction of his Soul*. So that nothing can be more necessary, upon the score of the nature of things, and the wisdom of Reason, than to be Religious; and nothing can be more absurd than Wickedness and Vice. Every thing that we *know*, and every thing that *is*; the perfections of God, the constitution of the World, and the quality of our selves, bind us to be Religious; because so we act agreeable to all these, and are approved by all to be wise and happy, to the utmost degree. But if we, after such advantages to understand the reasonableness, and

* Ὁ δὲ ψυχῆς θάνατος, ἀρετῆς μὲν θύρα ἐστὶ, κακίας δὲ ἀνάληψις. Philo de All. Leg.

ſimilitude of God, ſhall be acquitted at the day of Judgment, and have an immortal and bleſſed Life in Heaven. But thoſe who are deſtitute of that change, and ſo uncapable of that Bleſſedneſs, ſhall be condemned unto, and ſuffer the pains of eternal Death. Such is the *Hiſtory* of all things, and ſuch the *Truths* of the Chriſtian Religion; by which we are acquainted with what is moſt worthy of our Contemplation, and moſt important to our Intereſt. If then we ſhall *regulate* our Practice and our Expectations by theſe Truths, we muſt be perſuaded to live according to the guidance, that we may receive the bleſſedneſs of our Religion. We ſee hereby, in what rank and ſtation of the Creatures of God we are fixed; what our eſſential parts, and what our proper duration is. By all which, we muſt be convinced, that the Religion which we are to live by, is the Image of our God, the Perfection of our Nature, the Security of our Happineſs, and the Glory * of our State.

* Ἔστω δὴ εὐδαιμονία, εὐπραξία μετὰ ἀρετῆς. Ariſt.

On

wrought out for us. This Holy Ghoſt (by the gifts of Knowledge, Tongues, Miracles, and Prophecy it endued the Apoſtles with) enabled them, according to the Commiſſion of their Lord, to preach the Goſpel of the Kingdom, and gather a Church out of all Nations, which becauſe 'tis not confined to a Nation, as it was among the Jews, but extended to the whole World, 'tis called *Catholick* *. Thoſe who are Members of this Church, are by the operation of the Holy Ghoſt (concurring with the Inſtitutions Chriſt appointed) renewed after the Image of God, and as qualified for, entituled to the forgiveneſs of ſins. By the ſame Spirit (at the laſt day) Chriſt ſhall raiſe all men from the dead †; and after that, the Judgment ſhall proceed, by which their reſpective Portion unto Eternity ſhall be determined. Such who by the ſanctifying operation of the Spirit are transformed into the ſimi-

* Eph. 2. 15, &c. Acts 10. 34, 35. Col. 1. 20, 21. — 3. 11. Rom. 3. 29, 30. — 4. 9, &c.

† Rom. 8. 11.

ſively after his death, he roſe from the dead, and converſed forty days with his Diſciples after his Reſurrection, and before his Aſcenſion. That at the end of that time, he viſibly aſcended into Heaven *, in the preſence of his followers, after he had inſtructed them in the Doctrine of Religion, and aſſured them of the Miſſion of the Spirit of God. Upon his Aſcenſion into Heaven, he was advanced to Dominion over both Worlds, and now by Grace and Providence over-rules all things, and intercedes for his Servants. This ſhall be continued till his ſecond Coming, to judge all Mankind, and all fallen Angels, when he ſhall viſibly appear unto, and judicially determine the eternal ſtate of every one. But according to his Promiſe, as ſoon as he aſcended into Heaven, he ſent the *Holy Ghoſt* to be an Advocate on Earth †, as *He* was to be in Heaven; and to work that Salvation in us, which he wrought

* Acts 1. 9, 10, 11.

† John 16. 7.— 14. 16, 26. Acts 2. 3, 4, &c. Joh. 15. 26.— ἄλλον παράκλητον, 1 Joh. 2. 1. παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν—

feited their Happineſs; became accurſed in their ſtate, and malicious in their temper. That after God had made Man innocent & happy in two Perſons, *Adam* and *Eve*; one of theſe Apoſtate * Angels ſeduced him into ſin, and involved him (with his Poſterity) in miſery. That after ſuch Fall of Man, God did Reprieve him from Deſtruction, and deſigned him a Recovery, by a way as full of Wonder as Mercy. For we are told, That the Son of God aſſumed the Nature, that he might be the Son of Man †. That for about Thirty years he lived a life of Holineſs and Privacy; and after that, for about three years, he performed the Office of a Prophet; teaching the Doctrine, confirming the Truth, and exemplifying the Holineſs of Religion. That he then ſuffered Death, as an Expiation of our Sin, and the Merit of our Happineſs: He made Peace with God, and procured all Good for us. That upon the third day inclu-

* Gen. 2, 3.

† Ἐν ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, καὶ δι' ἀμφοῖν. Greg. Naz.

ſively

towards Sinners: By which we are introduced to the consideration of *God the Son* *, and in him, the Dignity of his Person, the manner of his Life, the quality of his Sufferings, the certainty of his Resurrection, the glory of his Ascension, the importance of his second Coming. As for the *Holy Ghost*, we are told of his Divinity of Person, his sanctifying the Church, his qualifying for Pardon, his raising the Dead, his preparing us for Glory. By which we understand, that God the Father is Creator of all things, God the Son is Redeemer of all men, God the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier of all the Elect. That Originally there was no other Being but God, who was infinite in Wisdom, Holiness, and Power. That at the instance of his Goodness, through the direction of his Wisdom, and by the operation of his Power, he created both Worlds, seen and unseen (Heaven and Hell,) and the Inhabitants of either; Angels and Men. That *some Angels* violated their Duty, and forfeited

* Vid. Four Gospels.

endear any Inſtitution to a rational (*i. e.* a wiſe) Being, as Man is.

1. Then, our *Religion* teaches us the *Truths* which we are to believe, and in them the excellency of *Wiſdom* (Speculative and Practical) which is the perfection of our *Rational Nature*. In thoſe Truths is contained the knowledge of the Nature, Works, and Will of *God*; by which we attain a right apprehenſion of our Maker, of the World, and of our Selves; which is all that is poſſible to be known. This God we may conſider as his Word teaches us, in three Divine Perſons; * Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; and diſtinctly, the Nature & Actions of each. Concerning God the *Father*, we are informed of his Incomprehenſible perfections of Nature, wonderful work of Creation, abſolute right of Dominion, juſt dealing with Angels, Original conſtitution concerning Man, gracious Indulgence toward[s]

Vid. Ap. Creed. v. *Tertull. de Virg. veland. p.* 173. *& de præſcript. haret. p.* 206.

* Μονὰς γὰρ ἐν τριάδι, καὶ τριὰς ἐν μονάδι γνωρίζεται. Juſtin. M.

Mat. 28. 19. 1 Joh. 5. 7. 2 Cor. 13. 13. John 17. 3.

ected. And this ſtate of Religion *continued* for about 2000 years more, counting from *Abraham* to Chriſt. The *Chriſtian Religion repeats* what was Spiritual and Eternal, in the ſeveral parts of the former Religions; *Repeals* whatever was Typical and Temporary in the Jewiſh; *Adds* what was wanting to compleat and perfect all, *viz.* adding to the *Truths* the Hiſtory of the Saviour of men: To the *Duties*, the expoſition of what was Spiritual; and two Inſtitutions which are Ritual, Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper. To the *Benefits*, it adds the notice of Immortality, of Heaven and Hell. Now according to *this* * perfect ſupernatural diſcovery of the will of God, which we enjoy, I am to ſhew how *Religion* is the higheſt *perfection*, and ought to be the affectionate Choice of men. The true *wiſdom* of Knowledge, of Practice, and of Enjoyment are contained herein; and nothing can more endear

* *Quia igitur naturalia omnia præcepta communia ſunt nobis & illis, in illis quidem initium & ortum habuerunt, in nobis augmentum & adimpletionem percepérunt.* Irenæus l. 4. c. 27.

of Religion *laſted* about 2000 years from *Adam* to *Abraham*. The *Jewiſh Religion*, beſides the *repetition* of all that was before it, *adds* unto the *Truths* a diſtinct Hiſtory of the Creation of the World, and the Fall of Man, of the Typical and miraculous Redemption of *Iſrael*, of the expreſs and ſolemn Covenant they were in with God. To the *Duties* it adds ſeveral Inſtitutions, whoſe nature was Typical and Temporary, Ritual and Civil, as ſo many fences for, and remembrances of what was Spiritual and Moral; beſides an incomparable digeſt of the Elements of all rational Holineſs in the Decalogue *. To the *Benefits* of Religion, it adds the confirmation of the Law, in Temporal Promiſes and Threats, which were typical of what were eternal Rewards and Puniſhments: And alſo the aſſurance of the *Meſſiah* †, at whoſe coming a more full diſpenſation was expected.

* Οἱ δέκα λόγοι, κεφάλαια νόμων εἰσί. Philo de decal.

† Deut. 18. 15, 18. Acts 3. 22.—7. 37. Joh. 1. 45.

*tions* of Religion, as to this matter: And thoſe are, *Natural*, or *Supernatural*. In *Natural Religion* there is (according to the former diſtinction) conſiderable, 1. The Being and Providence of God. 2. The difference of Good and Evil. 3. The nature of Happineſs and Miſery. In *Supernatural Religion* (which has had a gradual and three-fold Revelation) there is *Patriarchal*, *Jewiſh*, and *Chriſtian*; each of which comprehend and *repeat* what was Natural, and reſpectively *add* what is peculiar. For, in *Patriarchal Religion* there is an addition to the *Truths* of Natural Religion, the knowledge of the Creation, and government of the World: To the *Duties*, an addition of what are called the Precepts of the Sons of *Noah*; by which, Uncleanneſs, Murder, and Idolatry are provided againſt. To the *Benefits* are added the confirmation of the future ſtate, by the Tranſlation of *Enoch* *, and the Sufferings of the Faithful †. This ſtate of

* Gen. 5. 24. Heb. 11. 5.

† Heb. 11. 13, &c. v. 24, 25, 26.

2. I ſhall urge it, from the conſideration of the Nature of *Religion*, which is the Perfection of Man. That Religion may be diſtinguiſhed into *three parts*, agreeable unto, as perfective of him in the three-fold capacity of *Man*. For,

1. The *Truths* which we believe, are the excellency of our Underſtanding, and ſo the perfection of our *Rational Nature*.

2. The *Duties* which we are to perform, are the excellencies of Holineſs, and ſo the perfection of our *Voluntary Action*.

3. The *Satisfaction* we deſign, is the excellency of Happineſs (*viz.* our ultimate end, and chief good) and is the perfection of our *Proper Enjoyment*. Theſe are manifeſtly the *parts* of true Religion, under what *diſpenſation* ſoever we conſider it: But as *Chriſtianity* is the moſt compleat and comprehenſive ſtate of Religion, ſo according to *that*, 'tis fit we ſhould diſcourſe this Argument. Yet we may briefly view the concurrence of all other *Diſpenſa-*

under a perfect neceſſity of enjoying freedom from evil, and ſatisfaction from good; or of ſuffering the loſs of good, and the pain of evil. Each man's Actions do alſo very much contribute to his Portion; and that is moſt certainly known, and moſt commonly believed. He therefore who does not ſo act, as to conſult good to himſelf thereby, but forſakes the guidance of Wiſdom, which conduceth to the attainment of Happineſs, he ſhall exaſperate his miſery by his reflections, and condemn himſelf by remorſe, when he is condemned by Juſtice unto miſery.

Thus do the *Capacities* of man's *Rational Nature*, *Voluntary Action*, and *Proper Enjoyment* direct us what our Improvement may be, and what our Perfection is in that Improvement. We ſee alſo in general, that Religion is ſuited to our Rational Powers, and that the ſame God who has eſtabliſhed it by an Authority, has adviſed it by a Goodneſs, which is infinite. From theſe Arguments we may be perſwaded to be Religious. But more *diſtinctly*

2. I

the tranquillity and peace, the assurance and trust, the hope and joyfulness of good men, do greatly and evidently endear Religion to all who consider it. Insomuch, that every irreligious Person that observes the practice and welfare of the good, is forced to approve the choice of his practice, and the reward of his welfare. And whereas all men must once, and shortly die out of this World, and enter upon an unseen and eternal state: the worst of men desire *they* * *may die the death of the righteous, and that their last end may be like his.* As therefore *Religion* helps us unto that good, which is our proper enjoyment, and prevents, removes, or supports under the evil which is inevitable suffering; so does *wickedness* deprive us of the aforesaid good, and bring upon us intolerable degrees of the worst misery. If then it be manly to desire the felicity of man, and if it be allowable to avoid the miseries of such, then is Religion to be chosen by all who can either enjoy or suffer. Every man is

* Numb. 23. 10.

Religious Man has a mighty influence upon rendring his Dependants and Companions religious. Therefore whatever Evil he escapes, and whatever Good he obtains, by being Religious, such as are like him, have a share in; and their Society is a special and a mutual gratification. Now, that which a man *can* enjoy in his *own person*, and which a Religious man *does* enjoy in his, relates to his Body or Soul. And as to the *Body*, most certain it is, that whatever natural, or accidental Distempers and Pains any one suffers, yet the same Person is more free from, and more erect under pressures, who is Religious, than he would be, if he were otherwise. And as for the *Mind*, the ignorance and mistake, the perverseness and irregularity, the disorders and confusions, the anxieties and fears, the remorse and horror of wicked men, are so notoriously peculiar to them, that nothing is a more just and severe reproach of wickedness. On the contrary, the knowledge and wisdom, the order and decency, the consistency and settledness,

the

and oppoſition. And as *Honour* and Reputation implies a good opinion and reverence among men; ſo it affords him advantage for the gaining of profitable Wealth, or receiving officious miniſtrations. So that while we abide in this World, it is not inconſiderable what our Portion be, but whatever 'tis, Religion ſecures a Credit which is moſt durable, and enables us to enjoy a Portion that is but ſcanty. For nothing contributes ſo much to Reputation as Wiſdom of Knowledge, and Goodneſs of Action, both which the Religious do eminently excell in. And nothing does ſo regulate and retrench inordinate deſires, and ſo prevent the affliction of wanting what will gratifie thoſe that are exceſſive; as the meaſures of Religion, which direct us to uſe what is neceſſary of the World, and to enjoy an All-ſufficiency in God. Our *Relations* are as parts of our ſelves *; and ſuch of them as we *have* moſt converſed with, or *do*, we are moſt concerned in: And the

* Μέρη γὰρ τέκνα γονέων. Philo.

fects of Body or Mind, which are not our choice, but infelicity, we think juſtly we deſerve no reproach for: But thoſe failures of Action, which upon vile motives we condeſcend to, or by ſtupid inconſideration we were guilty of, thoſe we hide our heads, and cover our faces at the publication of. Every mans honour or diſgrace, is according to his actions; and no man deſerves ſo ill, as the ſinner, nor does any act ſo glorioufly, as the righteous.

3. In Man there is his *Proper Enjoyment:* Under which, we conſider the contrary thereunto, which is his *Suffering*. Now, every man is capable of Enjoyment, or obnoxious unto Suffering, in his *Eſtate*, *Relations*, or *Perſon*. There is an intereſt a man has in, and a dependance he has upon, *Things without*; and theſe are Wealth and Honour. By that which is comprehended under the name of *Wealth*, a man may procure ſuch accommodations and ſervices by which his condition will be much better'd; or for want of that Wealth, he may greatly ſuffer inconvenience and

men cry out upon, as the hard reſtraint of Bondage; they either do not unfeignedly ſo account, or ſhall ſoon diſcover the error of ſo accounting. For although while men are ſubject to the inclinations which are ſenſitive, and courted by Objects and occaſions ſuitable, they may by the abuſe of that Reaſon, which is Humane, approve the Indulgences which are beſtial; yet thoſe violences cannot be perpetual, and either their better information, or their juſt puniſhment, ſhall ſet them right. The worldly intereſts, and carnal pleaſures which tempt and deceive, ſhall not laſt for ever; and when thoſe ceaſe, we ſhall more plainly diſcern the unreaſonableneſs which we were guilty of, in our complyance with, and compaſſing of them. Then 'twill appear, that he who denied his ſenſitive appetite, and acted up to his rational judgment, did do what was moſt worthy, and moſt profitable: And that he who ſubmitted his Reaſon to the ſervice of his Luſts, did practiſe what was baſe and pernicious. Thoſe defects

Suffering, the irregularity of Action and Paſſion; in a word, the deprivation of ſuch Good as Men are capable of, and the involving in ſuch Miſery, as they are obnoxious to. But *Religion* is ſuch Wiſdom, as whoſo practiſes by it, makes a right eſtimate of things, propounds the true end of his Nature, chuſes the right Object and Meaſures of his Affections; acts according to the Obligations and Decencies of Man, enjoys what is truly advantageous and honourable, ſuffers only what is neceſſary and unavoidable; and in all caſes, has the acceptance of God, and the approbation of Men *. He can reflect upon his behaviour towards others, and the uſage of himſelf, upon the enterprizes he hath taken in hand, and the works he has accompliſhed, and without remorſe expoſe the ſecrets of his heart to the ſcrutinies of Juſtice. So much is Religion a Friend to Men, and he can be no true one to himſelf, who is not ſo to it. That Rational guidance of Religion, which wicked men

* Rom. 14. 18.

is agreeable to their proper Nature, and higheſt End: So Man (who is of a peculiar excellency) is obliged to do by *Choice*, and is inſtructed how to do it by his Underſtanding. Every man ſhould ſo think, affect, and practiſe, that he may maintain the true dignity of his Nature, and accompliſh the juſt deſigns for his Happineſs; otherwiſe his degeneracy and wretchedneſs will ſhame him with the diſhonour, and torment him with the uneaſineſs of it. Such an one as had in himſelf the capacity of great improvement, and compleat felicity depending upon his Actions, (which are to be guided by Underſtanding, and determined by Choice,) will unſpeakably confound and afflict himſelf, if he ſhall make himſelf forlorn and miſerable. But that is the cauſe of all wicked and irreligious Perſons, who pervert their Faculties, who fail of their improvement, and who introduce their ruine. *Impiety* in this Life, and for the preſent, does imply the diſgrace of Weakneſs and Folly, the damage of Loſs and Suffer-

gious, as we by that Nature are particularly capable.

2. In Man there are *voluntary Actions* *, by which I mean, not only his external performances, but his inward *Affections*. For altho' these Affections are not so purely voluntary as those performances; yet they are both his Actions, and in some degree his Choice. According to the faculties of our Soul, and powers of Body, are the Actions, which are performed by these: and therefore in this we must comprehend our Perception, Judgment, and Reasoning; our Choices, our Refusals, and our Hesitations; our Admiration, Love, Desire, and Joy; our Hatred, Anger, and Sorrow; our Command, Guidance, and Restraint of bodily powers: All which are capable of a Regulation by Wisdom, or without it, appear in the confusions of Folly. Now, as all Beings, which act by *Necessity*, do what is

* Ελεύθερε, γὰρ ᾧ αὐτεξούσιον ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον. Theoph. Anti. *Libertas enim arbitrii non ei culpam suam reputet à quo data est; sed à quo non ut debuit administrata est.* Tertull.

dom. But as Wiſdom extends to all the powers of Man, by which he knows, does, or enjoys: So Religion is in that full extent the perfection of Wiſdom. No man knows, does, or enjoys, ſo wiſely, as the *Religious*; if by *wiſely* we underſtand (as we ought to do) what becomes us, upon a full valuation of our ſelves. And if we make ſuch a juſt valuation, we ſhall not reckon barely of our fleſhly Body, and our worldly Life, but of our Rational Souls, and our Eternal duration. He acts moſt wiſely, who does ſo for himſelf, * in this reſpect; and 'tis plain, none does this, but the Religious. For whatever Wiſdom, Vicious, or Worldly men may diſcover, they do ſecure by it only the loweſt and ſhorteſt part of their Felicity; whereas the Religious Man accommodates himſelf with the beſt advantage, as to this Life and Body, and withal ſecures an immortal Life and eternal Bleſſedneſs. Therefore as we are *Men*, whoſe Nature is Rational, we are obliged to be Religious,

* Prov. 9. 12.

may feel such raptures of satisfaction intirely from the Mind, as no violence or necessity can deprive us of. Since then, we differ from Beasts, as to the *bodily part*, only in shape and figure; and our *Souls* are intirely distinct from, and most highly elevated above whatever is in them; we are bound in Justice to our selves, to study the improvement of our Rational Nature, and to place our Happiness in the perfection of that improvement. The true improvement of that is *Wisdom*, *viz.* that of Knowledge, of Action, and of Enjoyment; which Wisdom all men do most highly esteem, and most passionately pretend unto. There is no man of so low a spirit, and so degenerous abasement, that he is willing to be, or to be thought a *Fool*; and the cause is, that he thereby, and so far, would cease to be, or to be reputed a Man. For Reason is the Essential Property of Man, and Wisdom is but another name for Reason: And therefore if we value our Manhood, we must justly affect our Wisdom.

lue, if we did more fully underſtand our ſelves. We are made up of Soul and Body, in vital Union; and the inferior part is truly wonderful, though leſs excellent *. We live by the uſe of ſenſe, and in a world of Vanity: and we are too apt to confine our thoughts to what is ſecular, and corporeal. But our Reaſon, which has a right of Dominion over, as well as a ſort of dignity above Senſe, ought to be more frequently reflected upon, and more highly eſteemed. We have *Souls*, in which are Faculties of *Underſtanding*, *Memory*, and *Conſcience*; of *Will*, *Affection*, and *Activity*: by which we both do, enjoy, and ſuffer, in a diſtinct kind, and a peculiar manner. So that although our Bodies be in health, and our Accommodations in abundance, yet we feel ſuch anxieties, as are intolerable, that ariſe not from, and that have no relation unto our fleſhly part. Again, when our condition is poor, and our Bodies tormented, yet even then we may

* *Hic erit homo interior, alius exterior, dupliciter unus.* Tertul.

2. What *Religion* is, which is the Perfection of Man.

Perfection is the improvement of any Being, according to the kind and degrees of its *Capacities:* And therefore by a view of the Capacities of Man, we ſhall diſtinctly underſtand of what improvement he is capable, and wherein his Perfection does conſiſt.

Now in Man we may conſider,

1. His *Rational Nature.*
2. His *Voluntary Actions,* and
3. His *Proper Enjoyment.*

Every one of which is a noble Foundation, upon which to build our Perfection and Happineſs.

1. Then, from the *Rational Nature* of Man I ſhall recommend the practice of *Religion*; as that which we are obliged unto, and capable of thereby. Man is a Subject worthy of his own contemplation*: and we might more juſtly va-

* *E cælo deſcendit γνῶθι σαυτὸν,* Juv. Sat. 8. *Te conſule, dic tibi quis ſis.* Id. Ζῶον μὲν ἁπάντων ἰσχυρότατον ἄνθρωπος. *Syneſ.* Φαῦλόν τι χρῆμα ἦν ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις, *Greg. Nyſſ.*

lue,

# RELIGION

## THE

# Perfection of Man.

NOthing can be ſaid of Religion more great or true, than that, 'tis the Image of God, and the Perfection of Man. So that whoſoever deſires the utmoſt improvement of himſelf, and reſemblance of his Maker, may by Religion attain both, and the felicity reſulting from them. Upon this conſideration, I ſhall perſwade a Veneration of Religion, and in this Method direct the purſuit of Happineſs: repreſenting

1. What *Man* is, who is to be perfected by Religion: and

 2. What

XUM

TO THE

# READER.

*MY Design in the following Discourse is to acquaint you summarily with the Doctrine, and to perswade you effectually to the practice of true Religion. That Religion is nothing else but the Knowledge of Wisdom, and the Practice of Holiness: God grant you the accomplishment of both.*

XUM

# Imprimatur

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*Jo. Battely.*

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# RELIGION
## THE
# Perfection of Man.

By *John Jeffery*, M. A. Minister of St. *Peter's* of *Mancroft* in *Norwich.*

Μακαρίως δὲ ἴσως ἐπαγγελλόμεθα μετὰ παῤῥησίας καὶ ὑ κρύβδιν, τὸν ζῶντας κατὰ τ τῦ θεῦ λόγον —— Orig. cont. Celf. l. 3.

*Naturaliter compendium ſermonis & gratum & neceſſarium eſt: quoniam ſermo lacinioſus, & oneroſus, & vanus eſt.* Tertull. de Virg. veland. p. 175.

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